## WARRANT ARTICLE #13: To Restore Human Services \$66,000 Funding in FY 2013 Budget

## Petitioners: Housing for All citizen group (Ellie Manire-Gatti, Kevin Eddings, Reikka Simula-Gooden, Hwei-Ling Greeney)

As late as 1993, Town Meeting, Select Board and Finance Committee already were supporting funding for human services agencies. For example, under the recommendations of SB and Finance Committee, Town Meeting approved over \$91,000 for 15 human services agencies. These agencies are Amherst Survival Center, Not Bread Alone, Family Outreach of Amherst, Everywoman's Center, Children's Aid and Family Services, First, Call for Help, Hampshire County VNA Senior Health Services, Necessities/Neccesidades, Northampton Visiting Nurses Association, Amherst Resource Center, Salvation Army, YWCA/Youth Outreach Program, HomeSharing, and LSSE's After School Tuition Program.

By 2003 ten years later, under the recommendations of SB and Finance Committee, Town Meeting voted to approve about \$152,000 for 17 human services agencies. The agencies included **Amherst Survival Center**, Casa Latina Outreach Program, **Family Outreach of Amherst**, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, **Not Bread Alone**, Center for New Americans, **Children's Aid and Family Services**, **HomeSharing**, Everywoman's Center, Food Bank of Western Mass, Amherst Family Center, **First Call for Help**, Men's Resource Center, Safe Passages, Interfaith Cot Shelter Program, **YWCA/Youth Outreach Program**, **School-Age Tuition Assistance Program**. Eight (8) of the 15 agencies from 1993 were still on the Town support list in 2003.

In 2007, the Town Manager succeeded in persuading SB and FinCom to cut funding to human services agencies by half which was about \$66,000. Town Meeting agreed with the recommendation and voted to cut FY 2009 funding to human service agencies by half.

In 2008, the Town Manager succeeded in persuading SB and FinCom to cut the remaining funding to human services agencies. Town Meeting members were told by them that the support would be more stable, and the amount of support would increase. At the end, Town Meeting agreed and voted to eliminate the ENTIRE funding to human services agencies. So, starting in FY 2010, no Town funding was appropriated to support any of the human service agencies listed above.

In 2009, only some of the agencies applied for CDBG social service funding which amounted to \$200,000. The majority did not apply. The CDBG restriction that only five agencies can receive funding discouraged them from applying. For example, Not Bread Alone Soup Kitchen Program did not apply for this reason. Of the agency list, only Amherst Survival Center, and LSSE's After School Program received CDBG funding.

This year, Amherst Survival Center, Center for New Americans, Emergency Housing and Fuel Assistance Program, Child Care Tuition Assistance Program, and Craig's Place Shelter shared the \$200K CDBG funding.

The elimination of Town funding has forced many of the above agencies to cut back on their service. For example, Big Brother and Big Sisters have longer waiting list and are not able to serve as many youngsters as they did. Not Bread Alone Soup Kitchen is only able to provide cool aid instead of orange juice, and more hot dogs instead of good quality meat to its guests. Due to various difficulties including funding issues, the First Call for Help relocated to Easthampton from Amherst. This has made it difficult for Amherst residents to access their referral service. The Men's Resource Center has closed a couple of years ago as a result of funding cut by the Town and other funding sources.

What service should the Town support and fund? Given the increase in poverty and homelessness, the need for social services is evident. As a town, we are measured by how we treat our most vulnerable residents. The disappearance of the array of social services that we used to have has jeopardized the wellbeing of our children and families in this town. Even though the Town itself is experiencing some financial difficulties, but the poor and homeless experience the financial difficulties more so than most of us. We cannot abandon them in the name of balancing our budget. We need to look after one and other—especially when the time is hard like it is now.